

## Message Text

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14-12

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8965

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 7175

FOLNG FROM CALCUTTA DTD 30 MAY.

QIOTE: CALCUTTA 1205

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, IN

SUBJ: HARCOS/FLETCHER: THE POLITICAL ELEMENT

REF: NEW DELHI 7086 AND 7007

1. RE PARA 2, DELHI 7086, OUR FRIENDS ARE NOT WORKING ON THE HARCOS AND FLETCHER CASE TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, NEVER HAVE BEEN OR, IF THEY ARE, DO NOT DISCUSS IT WITH US NOR WE WOULD GUESS, WITH EACH OTHER. THIS IS AN OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT CASE. IT IS NOT A PUBLIC OR LOCAL POLITICAL ISSUE OF ANY SIGNIFICANCE WHATSOEVER. IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH FACTIONAL STATE CONGRESS PARTIES.

2. THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE LACK OF MOVEMENT ON THE CASE DESPITE THE EXPRESSIONS OF ACTIVE CONCERN ON THE PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT (HAIDER), THE CHIEF MINISTER OF WEST BENGAL (RAY), THE CHIEF SECRETARY OF WEST BENGAL (GUPTA) AND OTHERS. WHAT FOLLOWS ARE SOME HYPOTHESE FOR YOU TO CONSIDER.

3. (A) INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: THE TRIED AND TRUE INDIAN WHAMMY; THE GOI, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CONGRESS MAY NEED SOME JUICY ISSUES TO RESURRECT DURING THE UP-COMING LOK SABHA ELECTION CAMPAIGN. AS WE HAVE NOTED IN THE PAST, THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN  
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POLITICAL TECHNIQUE AROUND HERE KNOWN AS 'PENDING FILES';

DIFFICULT CASES ARE NEVER COMPLETELY DISPOSED OF--THEY ARE PUT ON THE BACK BURNER AS PART OF A POTENTIAL ARSENAL. THE KIND OF BEHAVIOR AND ACTION WHICH MIGHT FLOW FROM SUCH A DECISION ON THE HARCOS/FLETCHER ISSUE WOULD BE A DIRECTIVE ISSUED FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT (AFTER MUCH HOUNDING AND POUNDING ON THE PART OF AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS) TO THE CHIEF MINISTER DIRECTLY AND THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THROUGH THE HOME MINISTRY, TO THE EFFECT THAT 'ALL NECESSARY ACTION, WITHIN THE REALM OF THE POSSIBLE, AND KEEPING IN MIND THE IMPORTANT LEGAL PRECEDENTS AND SECURITY ELEMENTS INVOLVED, SHOULD BE TAKEN FORTHWITH TO DISPOSE OF THE CASE'. THE INTENT OF THE MESSAGE AND ITS INTERPRETATION WOULD BE 'PLAY IT BY EAR'.

4. (B) MORE LIKELY, THE BUREAUCRATIC ANGLE: THERE IS A LARGE AND PROBABLY IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF WEST BENGAL AND GOI INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT/WING PERSONNEL WHO OVER THE TWO PLUS YEARS THIS CASE HAS BEEN PENDING, HAVE INVESTED A GOOD CHUNK OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL REPUTATIONS IN THE PURSUIT OF A SERIOUS OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT TYPE PROSECUTION. THEY WILL NOT GIVE UP EASILY ON THE ISSUE, PARTICULARLY TO THE DEGREE THEY SENSE A FAINT-HEARTEDNESS AT THE POLITICAL OR SENIOR BUREAUCRATIC LEVELS. THAT FAINT-HEARTEDNESS, IF THERE, COULD BE BASED ON SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS; AMONG THEM: (A) THE TYPE OF AMBIVALENT, IF SUPERFICIALLY STRONG, MESSAGE FROM THE PM'S SECRETARIAT (PARA 3); (B) NATURAL POLITICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC RELUCTANCE TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO LATER RECRIMINATION OR PUBLIC CONTROVERSY IF THEY APPEAR TO BE SOFT IN MATTERS OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE; (C) A DEFERENCE TO THE VIEWS OF THE 'PROFESSIONAL' INTELLIGENCE/JUDICIAL PEOPLE HANDLING THE DAY-TO-DAY ADMINISTRATION OF THE CASE AND HESITANCY TO FORCE ANYTHING (EVEN WHERE THIS IS THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE) BECAUSE OF THE PENCHANT (THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN SOME EXAMPLES) OF THE WORKING LEVEL BUREAUCRATS TO GO TO AN EVER-RECEPTIVE PRESS WITH STORIES OF WEAKNESS AND 'KNUCKLING UNDER' TO THE U.S. PRESSURES AND A GENERAL DESIRE NOT TO DEMORALIZE THESE MEN WHO PERFORM A VALUABLE SERVICE TO THE NATION.

5. (C) THE CPI ANGLE: THERE ARE ENSCONCED EVERYWHERE IN THE WEST BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE/INTELLIGENCE NETWORK, INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMITTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST). BOTH GROUPS ARE, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, HAPPY TO EXACERBATE INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, EMBARRASS THE SENIOR POLITICANS AND BUREAUCRATS IN THE STATE AND, IF NEED BE, UNDERMINE THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT AS WELL.

6. OF THOSE VERY FEW STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WE KNOW ARE DEALING WITH THE CASE, THERE IS NOT ONE WITH WHOM WE WOULD FEEL CON-

FIDENT IN BROACHING THE SUBJECT, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE HEAD OF THE CHIEF MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT, BHASKAR GHOSH, BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PETER BURLEIGH. BUT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND FOR ALL OF THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP, GHOSH IS THE LOYAL SERVANT OF THE CHIEF MINISTER HIMSELF. BUT WHETHER THIS OPINION IS CORRECT OR NOT IS ACADEMIC SINCE GHOSH IS ON VACATION IN DARJEELING AND WILL NOT RETURN TO CALCUTTA BEFORE BURLEIGH'S DEPARTURE.

7. AS FOR POLITICIANS, AS WE INDICATED IN PARA 1, THERE IS NOT ONE EXCEPT THE CHIEF MINISTER WHOM WE HAVE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE IS INFORMED ABOUT OR INTERESTED IN THE HARCOS/FLETCHER CASE.

ROSSELOT UNQUOTE  
SCHNEIDER

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